



## Representative **Laura Ruderman**

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## **Representative Laura Ruderman 45th District**

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**“The future is not a gift: it is  
an achievement. Every gen-  
eration helps make its own  
future. This is the essential  
challenge of the present.”**

**Robert F. Kennedy, Seattle  
World's Fair, August 7, 1962**



## Representative **Laura Ruderman**

*Vice Chair of the House Democratic Caucus  
Technology, Telecommunications and Energy  
Committee (Vice chair), Appropriations  
Committee, Rules Committee*

Dear neighbor,

How can we rebuild trust between citizens and their democracy? I want to hear your ideas about how to get people informed and involved in the process.

With a \$2.4 billion hole in the state budget, the choices made by the Legislature this session will bring dramatic changes for all of our families. Unlike the federal government, our state can't run a deficit. Balancing the budget will be painful. While the budget is a challenge, I believe this is the perfect opportunity to focus on legislation and reforms that take courage instead of cash.

We need to rebuild the peoples' faith in their democracy. Citizens tell me they feel out of touch with Olympia – they want to know what's happening and how their voice can be heard. Our democracy is only strong when everyday people have the opportunity to become informed and involved citizens. That's why I'm focusing on reforms to restore trust and improve accountability.

Communication is a big part of restoring trust and improving accountability. Citizens need to have access to the same information that lawmakers do. That's why I send a weekly e-mail to citizens about what's happening in Olympia.

What do you think? I'd like to hear from you. Please call, write or e-mail to tell me a little about your experiences and your ideas for making Washington a better place to live, work, and raise a family. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

REP. LAURA RUDERMAN, 45th District

## Getting things done

In politics, there are two traditional ways of fixing any problem:

- (1) more – more taxes and spending; or
- (2) less – less spending, taxes and regulation.

The old way of thinking focuses on the size and scope of government. I believe there's a third way: focus on quality.

The best way to solve problems is to have the courage to compromise, to work with members of both parties on innovative reforms that bring real results. Innovation and reform are also the smartest ways to tackle complicated problems.

The old political tools are blunt instruments – it's like telling a carpenter building a house he can only pick one tool – a hammer or a saw. We need the whole toolbox. With no new money available, new ideas and tough reforms are the only tools we have to:

- unlog traffic gridlock,
- restore trust in our democracy,
- fix the health care crisis, and
- improve our schools.



## Unclogging traffic gridlock

For almost a decade, political gridlock in Olympia has gone hand-in-hand with traffic gridlock on I-405. Year after year, traffic strangles us a little more, destroying jobs and stealing more and more of our time.

I'm happy to report that the House voted to unlog political and traffic gridlock by passing three major transportation reforms. All three reforms work together to streamline government, increase accountability, and make the system work again.

## Restoring trust in our democracy

The first bill we passed out of the House is a keystone reform – performance audits (House Bill 1053) by the State Auditor.  
<http://www.leg.wa.gov/wsladm/billinfo/dspBillSummary.cfm?billnumber=1053>

You're probably familiar with financial audits to make sure the books are right and rules followed. Performance audits are entirely different. They're more like a report card and a list of suggestions to improve accountability and efficiency.

Republicans joined Democrats to pass this bill unanimously. It's a big step toward making our government work better for you.

## Fixing health care

More and more people can't afford the medicines they need. Prescription drugs are becoming the most expensive part of health care, with prices rising 35 percent more than inflation.

Unless we tackle it now, the problem will spiral out of control, with deeper budget cuts, more businesses dropping workers from health coverage, and thousands more people without any health insurance at all.

Whether the Legislature passes prescription drug reform will make a huge difference this year. Reform will:

- Give people the prescription medicine they need without making them choose between paying for pills or the heating bill;
- Help the state balance the budget, as prescription costs are skyrocketing, driving up the price of health care;
- Cut costs for businesses, especially small businesses hurt by the rising costs of health coverage for workers.



## Improving our schools

The quality of our public schools is directly related to the quality of the teacher standing in front of the classroom.

Here on the Eastside, too many teachers commute for hours – or leave the profession – because they can't afford to live in a home in or near the school district where they teach. That's why I introduced legislation to help teachers afford to live in high-cost areas like ours.



Here's a key part of the problem: a teacher making \$30,000 in Aberdeen can afford a decent house – you can buy a nice home for \$110,000. Let's say that same teacher transfers to the Lake Washington or Bellevue School Districts – she'd get the same salary, not enough to afford to live on the Eastside, where the median home price is almost \$450,000.

So it's no surprise that when the Bellevue School District surveyed teachers who took jobs in other districts in the state, six out of 11 said they moved because of the high price of living.

With the \$2.4 billion budget deficit, a housing allowance for teachers is a fair and effective way to help teachers who need it most – without breaking the bank. The future of our schools, our community, and our economy, depends on taking bold steps to attract and keep the best and brightest teachers.

I'm taking this step with support from Republicans and Democrats.

This session, we're also voting on other important reforms to improve our schools:

- Ending the supermajority requirement for school levies
- Giving a salary boost to the best and brightest teachers – those who achieve national certification